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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

##### Prospects for an Armenian Resolution in the US

All papers report visiting Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul met in Washington with US Congressmen John Murtha and Steny Hoyer, co-chairman of the US-Turkey caucus Robert Wexler, House minority deputy chairman Roy Blunt, and House foreign relations committee chairman Tom Lantos. Gul told the Americans the Turkish nation would perceive as "an insult" an approval by the US Congress of the Armenian genocide bill. Cumhuriyet reports Gul also asked the Jewish lobby to oppose the upcoming resolution, stressing that otherwise, Turkey-Israel ties would be "adversely affected."

Responding to questions from the Turkish press via digital video conference from Washington, Dan Fried said a Congressional adoption of the Armenian resolution would "damage US-Turkey ties" and would "not serve Turkey-Armenia dialogue." "Great nations should face the dark spots in their history," Fried emphasized, noting the US also had such dark times in its history, recalling slavery. "I was deeply saddened to hear the assassination of journalist Hrant Dink," Fried said, adding the reaction of "hundreds of thousands of Turks" during the funeral of Dink was a "strong and sound one."

##### Reaction to PKK Operations in Europe

All papers report security operations initiated in France and Belgium resulted in the detention of 16 PKK members including prominent leaders Nedim Seven and Aydin Turan. Dan Fried, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, told Turkish journalists during a digital video conference yesterday between Ankara and Washington that the US welcomed operations against the PKK in European countries, adding the US would continue fighting against the terrorist organization not only in Europe but also in the north of Iraq. FossWilson, speaking to reporters after a meeting in Istanbul in which the booklet "A Guide to the US Market" booklet was launched, indicated the US has been trying to convince European governments to take the PKK question more seriously as an "organized crime" problem. Wilson expressed pleasure that Germany, France and

Belgium have launched initiatives against the PKK as a result of earlier meetings with the US.

Papers also report Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, continuing his official US visit, told a gathering of German Marshall Fund in Washington, "It's natural that Turkey has ties with Iraq, a region we have ruled for centuries. We, however, recognize today's realities that Iraq belongs to the Iraqis. We gave Mosul to a unified Iraq in 1926, and want to see a unified Iraq now." Gul said with regard to the future of Kirkuk that violence would diminish in the region if former Baathists were integrated into the system.

#### Editorial Commentary on FM Gul's Trip to the US

Rusen Cakir argues in the mass appeal Vatan that the visit is not as successful as officials say: "Despite the official rhetoric describing FM Gul's visit to Washington as the most important and successful visit in recent years, my observation finds this interpretation very hard to take as reality. The fact of the matter is that the Armenian resolution issue comes with many years of historical background and it cannot be resolved by a visit. The Democratic majority in the Congress, the pro-Armenian figure Nancy Pelosi and the strong efforts by the Armenian diaspora do not point to a Turkey-favored outcome from the US Congress on this issue. Another important issue between Turkish-American relations is the PKK and we could get nothing more than an observation from FM Gul

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that Americans 'feel embarrassed' on the issue. Gul acknowledges US involvement in the recent operations against PKK in Europe but also understands that US responsibility on the PKK issue cannot be only limited to the European link. Northern Iraq is still on the watch. We hope that FM Gul, during his meeting with Secretary Rice, emphasized the need for concrete action against PKK in northern Iraq and warned about the rising threat of nationalism. We shall see if Washington will present a bonus to AKP on this issue just like late PM Ecevit's DSP was rewarded with the Ocalan handover."

Economic Partnership Commission (EPC) Meeting in Istanbul  
Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet and others: The third meeting of Turkey-US Economic Partnership Commission was held in Istanbul yesterday. US Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson, Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Sullivan for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, and the Turkish Chamber of Commerce (TOBB) Chairman Rifat Hisarciklioglu attended the meeting. A/S Sullivan, who made a presentation at the meeting, said that 'Turkey has important opportunities regarding natural gas and oil pipelines. Sullivan said that the US is going to continue its support for the regional energy projects, will exert efforts to develop the energy markets and that automatically would bring the economic growth in Turkey.' Noting that the private sector contributes more than the public sector to the development of economic relations between Turkey and the US, Sullivan said that relations regarding the economy and the energy sector will always be important in the future. Sullivan added that Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline is an important accomplishment and a concrete example of regional cooperation. Meanwhile, a manual covering suggestions for improving the business relationship between Turkey and the US prepared by TOBB was distributed to the participants before the meeting.

#### Editorial Commentary on the Middle East

Sami Kohen writes in the mainstream Milliyet: "Even though most attention has been given to the Iraq issue, the clashes in Palestine continues to rise dramatically. There are some diplomatic efforts to end the bloodshed in the Middle East by Sauan as well as the quarteen finally reached between the sides afte some tough bargaining. The main question now is to what extent the national consensus government will function, and to what extent the armed militants of Hamas and Fatah will comply with the consensus."

#### Pro-Kurdish Professor Prosecuted

The leftist/nationalist Cumhuriyet reports a prosecutor in Istanbul has filed a lawsuit against Professor Ismail Besikci for "inciting hatred and enmity via the press" in an op-ed in December 2005. The prosecutor asked for up to 4.5 years in prison for Besikci under Turkish Penal Code article 216/1, and for up to two years for Mehmet

Ali Izmir and Ferzende Kaya, the editors of Esmer magazine which published the op-ed that had criticized the practice that Kurdish elementary school students are forced to take a daily oath saying "I'm a Turk, true and hardworking; let myself be a gift to the Turks' presence." The Turkish General Staff (TGS) proclaimed that Besikci committed a crime in the op-ed. Professor Ismail Besikci, a sociologist at 68, has spent 17 years in prison for several of his books and articles supporting the Kurdish cause.

#### Bird Flu Detected in the South East

All papers and TV channels reported that over a year after a deadly outbreak of Avian Influenza in Turkey which left four people dead and millions of birds culled, Agriculture Ministry teams yesterday said that some 170 birds had died from the contagious disease in the village of Bogazkoy in the southeastern Batman province. The region was promptly put under quarantine. Agriculture Ministry stated that

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the teams will begin culling birds that may have been infected.

#### Forced Approval from President Sezer to Cargill Draft

Radikal reports that President Sezer approved the "Cargill" law this time, after vetoing it twice before. President Sezer stressed that he will appeal to the Constitutional Court for the amendment of the subject law article which allows agricultural lands to be used for other purposes. Because it protects the interests of the US firm Cargill, the law has come to be known as the 'Cargill Law' by the public.

#### TV Highlights

NTV (6 a.m.)

#### Domestic News

- An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale jolted Turkey's eastern province of Elazig, wounding 28 and causing damage in buildings.
- Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan expressed concern regarding the rise of nationalism in Turkey, complaining that Turkish Armenians were perceived as "potential enemies."
- Research conducted by Selcuk University shows that 56 percent of AKP voters don't want Prime Minister Erdogan to be Turkey's next president.
- Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener said Turkey needs to change its perception of free speech instead of seeking changes to article 1301.
- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is expected to visit Turkey on February 15.

#### International News

- A roadside bomb wounded slightly Yunus Bayraktar, the secretary general of the Turkmen assembly in Kirkuk.
- The Greek Cypriots want to block the construction of a new power plant in north Cyprus which will solve the energy problems of Turkish Cypriots.
- Greek Cypriot Foreign Minister George Lillikas said a proposal for direct trade from the Turkish Cypriot port of Magosa (Famagusta) could be considered only if the ghost-town of Maras (Varosha) is transferred to south Cyprus.
- Hamas and Fatah have agreed on a national unity government.
- Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades threatened to attack synagogues if Israel continues excavations near the al-Aqsa mosque.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON